



Report 04.413
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Committee Landcare
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Environmental asset management plan performance indicator

1. Purpose

To report to the Committee on progress on the Environmental Asset Management Plan (EAMP) during the 2003/04 financial year in order to meet the performance indicator requirements of the Annual Plan.

2. Annual Plan performance indicator

The 2003/04 Annual Plan contains the following performance indicator:

Environmental assets and settings within the parks, forests and water collection areas will be monitored, protected and enhanced, in accordance with the Parks and Forests Asset Management Plan service levels, within a budget of \$714,000.

Compliance with the standards in the Asset Management Plan will be reported to the Landcare Committee following the end of the financial year.

The performance indicator was substantially achieved this year at a cost of \$612,000. Two possum control operations we had planned to do in the 2003/04 year are in progress but have not been completed as yet. These are the operations at Speedy's Bush in Belmont Regional Park and at the Lakes Block in East Harbour Regional Park. The latter operation could not be started until the expiry of the grazing lease in late May to avoid affecting farming operations.

3. Contribution to Take 10 Objectives

This performance indicator contributes to the quality of life of the regional community by ensuring that the natural assets (water, ecosystems, flora, fauna etc.) in the regional parks, forests and water collection areas are protected and that GWRC, as a land manager, displays leadership and showcases good ecosystem management.

4. Progress of the environmental asset management plan

We have been implementing pest control programmes to maintain ecosystem health in the Council's parks and forests. Possums, goats, pigs, rabbits, deer, mustelids and pest plants have been controlled according to the highest priority needs identified through monitoring work and the pest control programme.

Monitoring work and surveys have continued to provide useful information for the environmental management of Council lands and about the success of control operations. All Water Group contract specifications were met and an independent Landcare Research audit of the data collection in the permanent plots has shown that our work meets industry standards.

5. Key aspects of the work programme achieved

The following is a summary of the key aspects of the work programme that were achieved during the year.

5.1 Monitoring

- Rata digital photography was completed in the Hutt and Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Areas;
- Hinau fruitfall plots were measured in the Hutt and Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Areas;
- Tawa fruitfall plots were measured in Kaitoke Regional park and the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area;
- Permanent vegetation plots (National Vegetation Survey plots) were re-measured in Pakuratahi Forest and Kaitoke Regional Park (four plots in total);
- Bird transect surveys were completed in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area, Kaitoke Regional Park, Queen Elizabeth Park, Battle Hill Farm Forest Park and the Hutt Water Collection Area;
- New bird transect surveys were established in Belmont Regional Park and on the Hutt River Trail;
- Pre-operational possum monitoring was completed in Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area and the Lakes Block of East Harbour Regional Park;
- Post-operational possum monitoring was completed in the Hutt Water Collection Area;
- Ungulate browse plots were re-measured in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area;
- Pest plant infestations were surveyed in the northern block of East Harbour Regional Park;
- A botanical survey of Draper's Flats wetland in the Akatarawa Forest was completed;
- The location of a new rare mistletoe site in Kaitoke Regional Park was recorded using Global Positioning System (GPS);

- The moss flora were surveyed in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Catchment Area;
- Alder, selaginella and dogwood infestations were mapped in the Akatarawa Forest;
- New buddleia infestations were surveyed in Pakuratahi Forest;
- Rodent and mustelid numbers were monitored in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area and in the northern forest in East Harbour Regional Park;
- Seedling growth in dune exclosure plots was assessed and dune vegetation plots were re-measured in Queen Elizabeth Park;
- The location of the dune-line at Queen Elizabeth Park was recorded using GPS;
- Wetlands on land owned or managed by GWRC were assessed and monitored as part of the Wetland Action Plan;
- Monthly flowering and fruiting recording was completed across all parks and forests;

5.2 Pest Animal Control

- A 1080 possum control operation was completed in the Hutt Water Collection Area. Possum numbers were reduced from a pre-operational trap catch rate (RTC) of 23% to a post-operation trap catch of 0.5%;
- An ongoing possum and rat control operation was established in the northern block of East Harbour Regional Park;
- Bait stations were installed in Speedy's Bush in Belmont Regional Park. An ongoing possum control operation will be initiated early in 2004/05;
- Volunteers from the Friends of Maara Roa group have continued to maintain bait stations in Cannon's Creek bush remnant in Belmont Regional Park;
- Three Judas goat control operations and two pig control operations were completed in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area (a total of 57 goats, 29 pigs and 7 deer were culled);
- A large vertebrate control operation was conducted in Kaitoke Regional Park resulting in the culling of 47 goats and 1 pig;
- A goat culling operation in Akatarawa Forest/Battle Hill Regional Park removed 142 goats and 2 pigs, largely from the Mt Wainui area;
- Large vertebrate control operations in the Pakuratahi Forest, Belmont Regional Park and the Lakes Block of East Harbour Regional Park were completed;
- Rabbit control was undertaken in Queen Elizabeth Park;
- Traps and bait stations were maintained in the bush remnant in Battle Hill Farm Forest Park, as part of the ongoing possum and mustelid control;
- Possum control operations were continued in both the bush remnant and the dune remnants in Queen Elizabeth Park;

5.3 Pest Plant Control

Pest plants were controlled on Council land according to the pest plant priorities identified through weed mapping and strategic analysis. The control operations completed include:

- Boneseed, evergreen buckthorn, boxthorn, German ivy, blackberry, Japanese honeysuckle, pampas, karo and elderberry in Queen Elizabeth Park;
- German ivy, convolvulus, holly, tradescantia, selaginella and wilding pines in Battle Hill Farm Forest Park;
- Holly, hawthorn, sycamore, blackberry, broom and Himalayan honeysuckle in Kaitoke Regional Park;
- Old man's beard, ivy, tradescantia, selaginella, brush wattle, German ivy and Japanese honeysuckle in Belmont Regional Park;
- Buddleia, tradescantia, holly, privet, eleagnus, wilding pines and ivy in the Pakuratahi Forest;
- Old man's beard, selaginella, Japanese honeysuckle, buddleia, Montpellier broom, hops, wilding pines and cotoneaster in the Akatarawa Forest;
- Buddleia and wilding pines in the Wainuiomata/Orongorongo Water Collection Area;
- Holly, Japanese honeysuckle, buddleia, ivy, tradescantia and barberry in the Wainuiomata Recreation Area;
- Boneseed from along the cliffs near the Lakes block of East Harbour Regional Park;

4.4 Pencarrow Lakes

Grazing around the Pencarrow Lakes ceased in May 2004. In June, NIWA scientists completed a baseline survey of submerged aquatic flora in the Pencarrow Lakes and a number of vegetation plots were established on the land surrounding the lakes. These monitoring techniques will be used to evaluate any ecological changes that may occur over time because of the change in land use.

4.5 Fire Protection

One of the predominant threats to a balanced native vegetative cover is fire. Any fire will probably result in the destruction of vegetation cover over the burnt area.

Staff throughout the year attended no fires. The fire risk in the Hutt Valley and on the Kapiti Coast was ranked as moderate to low. Fire training exercises have been held during the year, so that we maintain a team who have met the minimum requirements needed to fight fires and are ready to assist the Territorial Authorities with their fire fighting commitments.

6. Where to from here?

During the 2004/05 year, we will continue to implement the EAMP by:

- Completing programmed pest control operations using the most effective techniques;
- Continuing to work towards an integrated program of pest control in high ecological value areas on Council land;
- Exchanging knowledge and ideas with other agencies, such as the Department of Conservation, Territorial Authorities, Landcare Research and the Coastal Dune Vegetation Network;
- Continuing to work with the community;

7. Communication

This report is part of the verification process for meeting Annual Plan performance indicators. There are no other communications opportunities arising from this report.

8. Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. *receive the report.*
2. *note the contents of the report.*

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